

Smart Start & The Early Childhood Support Team

Smart Start is a comprehensive, state-wide initiative which targets children birth to five years old to make sure they begin school healthy and ready to learn.

The Early Childhood Support Team, begun in 1995 is one of the many projects the Catawba County Partnership for Children chose to implement with Smart Start funding. Its innovative team approach is unique to Catawba County. Nurses, Education Specialists, and Clinical Specialists work with each program enrolled for services. The Clinical Specialists also work with children not in group care.

All of the services of the Early Childhood Support Team are provided free to you; they are funded by the state Legislature using money set aside for Smart Start.



Helping families, children, and care providers.



A Catawba County
Smart Start Project

The Early Childhood Support Team: The Clinical Specialists

Sweetwater Early Childhood Education Center
2110 Main Avenue SE
Hickory, NC 28602

Phone: 828-695-6590
Fax: 828-328-4551



The Early
Childhood Support
Team: The Clinical
Specialists

**Helping families,
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care providers.**

Tel: (828) 695-6590



Information about Services from The Clinical Specialists

Who are we and what do we do?

The Clinical Specialists are psychologists and professional counselors who provide services for children experiencing social, emotional, and behavioral difficulties. Services include individual and family counseling, recommendations of interventions to childcare staff, and referrals to other resources when appropriate. Clinical Specialists also conduct workshops for teachers and parents.

Common Reasons for Referrals

- Loss or grief issues
- Difficulty adjusting to life changes
- Aggression against peers and staff
- Inattention and hyperactivity
- Behavior that is not typical

The Referral Process and Services

Referrals come from a variety of sources but most often from child care center directors or parents who have concerns about a child. Referrals are not made without a parent's written consent. Once the referral form is completed and submitted to a member of the Early Childhood Support Team, the referral

the referral will be assigned at the weekly team meeting. The Clinical Specialist will make every effort to contact the parent of the referred child within two business days to schedule an intake appointment. During the intake appointment, information is gathered about the child's developmental, social-emotional, and family history, and goals are developed. The Clinical Specialist will begin work with the child once the intake is completed.

Services provided by the Clinical Specialist include weekly visits to the center to work with the child, the child's teacher, and the center director to assist the child in reaching their goals. Occasionally meetings with the parent and childcare staff may be arranged to determine the most effective interventions. In addition, the Clinical Specialist will meet with the family at least once monthly to review parenting skills and focus on issues within the home that may be impacting the child. Parental involvement is critical to every child's success.

Commonly Asked Questions

What if I am not sure my child needs to be referred for behavioral/emotional concerns?

Childcare center and preschool directors or parents may contact a member of the team to request an observation of your child. You will need to provide written consent for this observation to occur. After the observation, the Clinical Specialist will provide feedback and discuss the necessity of a referral.

How long does a Clinical Specialist typically work with a referred child?

With active involvement from everyone, some issues are resolved quickly, while others may take

much longer. Services are provided until the child and family reach their goals or decide treatment is no longer necessary. If the Clinical Specialist believes that other types of services would be beneficial and the parent agrees, a referral will be made to the most appropriate resources.

What information about my child or family will be shared with center staff?

Information provided by you about your child or family is protected under confidentiality. The Clinical Specialist will share information about interventions you are using at home to address specific behaviors in order to provide consistency. Personal information about you and your family will not be shared with the child care center. However, should you fail to keep your scheduled appointments with the Clinical Specialist, this information may be shared with the center in order to determine continuation of services.

We are always happy to answer your questions and discuss how we may help you and your child. Please feel free to contact us at the number provided in this brochure.

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